

Cervical Cancer Statistics

- 50% of women diagnosed with cervical cancer are between the ages of 35 and 55.
- Cervical cancer occurs most often in Hispanic women; African-American women develop this cancer more than twice as often as non-Hispanic white women.
- The 5-year relative survival rate for the earliest stage of cervical cancer is 92%.
- The overall (all stages combined) 5-year survival rate is 73%.
- In 2006, approximately 9700 women will be diagnosed with invasive cervical cancer.
⇒ Approximately 3700 of these women will die.
- Between 1955 and 1992 the number of deaths from cervical cancer dropped by 74%.
⇒ This was primarily due to regular pap testing.

—The American Cancer Society



Department of Veterans Affairs

Central Texas Veterans Health Care System
1901 S. Veterans Memorial Drive
Temple, Texas 76504
1-254-778-4811
Toll Free:
1-800-423-2111

Important Numbers for Women Veterans:

Women Veterans Program Manager

Jana O'Leary, LMSW 1-800-423-2111, Ext. 42956

Program Clerk: Doris Morgan

Women's Health Care Providers

Temple:

Dr. Manuel Morales-GYN

Dr. Shantasri Mukhopadhyay

Millie Johnson, Nurse Practitioner

Cindy Blankenship, RN

Stephanie Carter, RN

Donna Curtis, LVN

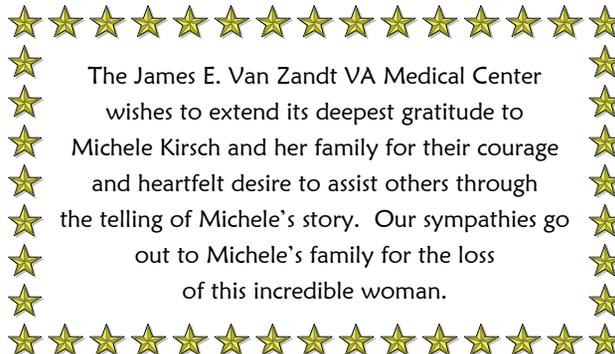
Austin:

Dr. Jacqueline Davis, Austin CBOC

Lillian Cain, RN

Temple: 1-800-423-2111, Ext. 40441

Austin: 1-512-389-1010



Michele's Story

Advice from a veteran with cervical cancer

Don't Wait

Michele's Last Wish

Michele was a very special woman. She was an honorably discharged Army veteran who proudly served her country from 1983 to 1986. Michele was married and had two children. We refer to Michele in the past tense because she died on May 19, 2006 at the age of 40.

Two weeks before her death, Michele requested that we assist her in helping others to make the right decisions regarding their health care - decisions that Michele, herself, tragically did not make.

Prior to July 2005, Michele had refused the yearly offers of pap tests, even though the risks of cervical cancer were explained to her. As so many others have done, Michele felt that she was much too young to worry about her health. She was too busy enjoying life - being a mother, wife, daughter, sister, and friend. Besides, she had no symptoms, and was feeling fine. Why would you go to the doctor if you weren't sick? On July 25, 2005, Michele came to the Women's Health Clinic with a complaint of abnormal vaginal bleeding and consented to a pap test. She was scared. Something was very wrong, and she knew it.

(Cervical pre-cancers and early cancers usually show no symptoms. Only after the cancer has become invasive to nearby tissue does a woman begin to experience symptoms. The most common symptom is abnormal vaginal bleeding.)

The catastrophic results of Michele's pap test confirmed that she had Stage 3 Cervical Cancer. She was referred to a gynecologist in Pittsburgh who attempted to perform a hysterectomy. Again, the outcome was catastrophic - the cancer was too far advanced for surgical removal.

Michele underwent both radiation and chemotherapy but was unable to overcome the incredible odds of survival.

As a result of her experiences, Michele felt so strongly about the importance of early detection of this disease that she told her provider **"This test should be mandatory for all women veterans. You should withhold veterans' benefits until these tests are done."**

Of course, VA would never violate a woman's right to make her own health care decisions; however, with the help of Michele, we can help women to make the right choice.

Michele didn't want other women to have to go through what she went through, both physically and emotionally. Michele said, **"You shouldn't have to say goodbye to the ones you love this early in life. I hope this message will keep other women from making the same mistake I made."**

(Human Papillomavirus infection [HPV] is the most common risk factor. Other risk factors include smoking, HIV infection, Chlamydia infection, poor diet, oral contraceptives, multiple pregnancies, low income status, and DES [hormone used between 1940 and 1971]).

Cervical cancer can be successfully treated if caught in its earliest pre-cancer stages. A yearly pap test is a woman's best means of early detection of pre-cancer cells before it becomes cervical cancer.

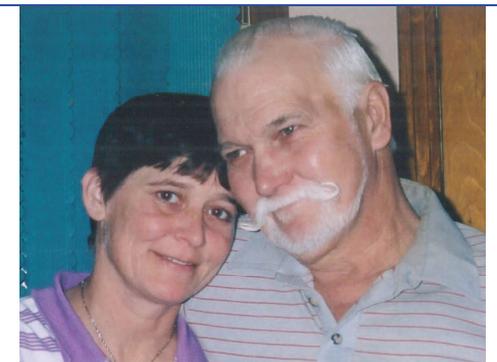
Despite the obvious benefits of pap test screenings, not all American women take advantage of it. Between 60% to 80% of American women, with newly diagnosed invasive cervical cancer, have not had a pap test in the past five (5) years; many have *never* had a pap test. In particular, elderly, African-American, and low-income women are less likely to have regular pap tests.

If you would like more information on cervical cancer, risk factors for cervical cancer, or pap testing, please talk to your physician or primary care provider; or contact the American Cancer Society.

http://www.cancer.org/docroot/lrn/lrn_0.asp

**Won't you take Michele's advice?
Have regular pap tests.**

DON'T WAIT



Michele and husband, Allen